

*To the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lord,  
The Lord Cosimo de' Medici,  
Duke of Florence*

Among all creatures to be found in this world, most virtuous and benevolent prince, only man can elect for and by himself a condition and end for his actions; and, taking whatever path best pleases him, can spend his life according to the decision of his own private judgment rather than according to the inclination of nature. For if we consider carefully the nature of life, to every species there are assigned, by means of inviolable laws, certain fixed limits, within which they must seek their ends and beyond which they are forbidden to pass; but man may change for better or worse the being which was originally assigned to him. Thus there has been freely placed within man's power the ability to choose whatever method of living most pleases him, and like a new Proteus to transform himself into whatever form he elects, taking on, just like a chameleon, the color of whatever object he is most affected to; and finally to make of himself either a terrestrial or a divine creature by piercing through all barriers to that state which his own free will most desires. Hence it may clearly be seen that while men, either through bad fortune or bad choice, live all intent upon

the things of this world, holding their eyes forever fixed upon physical and worldly objects and never lifting them to heaven, their lot is little better than that of brutes, and indeed they become very much like the other animals, who have no use at all of reason. But then when you have freed them as much as possible from earthly objects, they return to their true and proper operations, and rising from low and earthly things to lofty and divine ones, they become (being drawn toward their true perfection) similar to those timely-happy spirits which live, outside the bounds of this corruptible world, in the blissful and joyous contemplation of divinity itself.

This is the point, most illustrious and excellent prince, which I have sought to demonstrate as best I could in my present dialogues, following in the path of the most learned Plutarch, and trying as best I could to be of assistance to others, which is the true and proper office of all men. And just as men are naturally obliged to honor God, not only with their minds and their words, but with some exterior sign, even the dearest and most precious thing they have, so also, as best they can, they should always honor their princes, who, as the same Plutarch says, are the very images and representatives of God. For in their sphere of life, princes occupy the same position which God maintains in the universe; and thus I, who both by nature and by free choice am the servant of your most illustrious excellency, and know very well how much I am obliged, both naturally and in exchange for benefits received, to honor you perpetually; and desiring, though I cannot do so in the manner I would most wish, to show at least the readiness of my soul, have taken courage to present you with these little products of my labors, trifles though they are, begging humbly that, as God himself in all his grandeur scorns no gift, though insignificant and

valueless, which is offered with a pure and sincere mind, so your excellency may not be displeased with this my tiny little gift, even though, while it is among the best and dearest of my possessions, it doubtless appears all too feeble and weak, by comparison with the grandeur and the merits of your excellency.

Thus, finally, I beg that your excellency, overlooking all the deficiencies of my work because of the goodness of my intentions, will be pleased to receive it favorably; in the full assurance that I ask nothing more than, as is my duty (being, as I am, your most faithful and most devoted servant), to serve you and honor you forever.

At Florence, on the first of March, 1548

GIOVANNI BATTISTA GELLI

*The Argument to  
the Ensuing Dialogues*

After the destruction of Troy by the Greeks, Ulysses set sail for his own country and, having been long driven by contrary winds, at last arrived at the island of Circe. Here he found a most courteous reception, which made him the more willing to tarry. But at last, being desirous to see his native country again, he asked Circe's leave to depart, and begged of her that she would be pleased to restore to their human shape those Greeks whom she had transformed into beasts, that he might carry them home to their respective places of abode. Circe complied with his request, but upon this condition, that only those who were willing to become men again should reassume their old shape; the rest should stay behind and end their days in the bodies of those animals into which they had been changed. And that Ulysses might know their sentiments upon this matter, she granted them the power to speak and converse with him, just as they would have done when they were men.

Ulysses visits the whole island, and discourses with several of the beasts, who give him their reasons why they rather choose to continue in that state than become men again. At last he meets with one who, considering the excellence of

man, and how much superior he is to all other creatures by means of his reason and understanding, is desirous to be restored to his former shape. Having effected this by the intercession of Ulysses, first of all, as in duty bound, he renders his thanks to an omnipotent and all-loving God; and then they return joyfully together to their own country.

*Dialogue I: Ulysses, Circe, Oyster, and Mole*



*Ulysses:* Although, Madam, I have received so many proofs of your kindness and affection that I could willingly pass my days on this delightful and charming island, yet that love which every man bears to his native country and my desire to behold my dear friends after I have so long been absent from them while wandering up and down the world make me uneasy to leave you and return to my own home again. But, Madam, before I take my leave of you, I beg you to tell me whether, among those unhappy wretches

whom you have transformed into lions, wolves, bears, and other beasts, there are any Greeks.

*Circe:* Yes, my dear Ulysses, there are; but why do you ask me this question?

*Ulysses:* Let us sit down on this rocky seat, from which we can look out on the ocean waves and relish the sea breezes, as they waft through the flowering shrubs; here we'll have a chance to chat pleasantly together—and I'll tell you the reason for my question.

*Circe:* Just as you say; I have no other wish than to please you.

*Ulysses:* The reason I asked about the Greeks, most beautiful Circe, was that I had resolved to beg you to restore them to their human shape, so that I might carry them with me, home to their own country.

*Circe:* And why should you ask this of me?

*Ulysses:* Because I pity their hard circumstances, as being my countrymen, and because it would give me no little reputation in Greece to deliver them from this captivity. Whereas, on the other hand, should it be known that it was in my power to free them from their miserable captivity, but that I neglected it and so left them to lead a wretched life as beasts, I think all mankind ought to exclaim against me.

*Circe:* Some people perhaps might call this charity and commend you for it; the poor fellows themselves will be so far from thanking you for this deliverance that they will never forgive you, but pelt you with curses, a thousand a day.

*Ulysses:* Why, is it an injury to free a man from the condition of a brute and restore him to his former state?

*Circe:* The greatest in the world, and to convince you that this is no untruth, pray take the pains to ask them yourself. For I won't grant you this favor unless they willingly agree to it.

*Ulysses:* But how shall I be able to know their minds, since as beasts they can neither understand my speech nor answer it? I am afraid you intend to play some sort of trick on me.

*Circe:* Never fear that, for I will restore to them their speech.

*Ulysses:* And shall they be able to discourse as rationally as they could do when they were men?

*Circe:* Yes, indeed, for as I changed them into beasts, so by my means they shall be restored to all the knowledge they had as real men. And, that we may lose no more time, do you see those two shells fastened to yonder stone, which open and then shut again? and that hillock of earth, a little out of the water, at the foot of that palm tree?

*Ulysses:* I see them plain enough.

*Circe:* In the former lives an oyster and in the other a mole, that were formerly men and Greeks. Go talk with them, and that you may do so the more freely, I will take a stroll on the shore. When you have finished your chat with them, come to me, and I will do whatever you would have me.

*Ulysses (alone):* 'Tis very strange, this that Circe has told me! that, continuing in the bodies of beasts, they should be able by her means to discourse and reason with me. It seems so incredible that I am almost afraid of putting it to trial, lest I should be laughed at for my pains. But should it happen so, there is none but Circe here to jeer at me, and she has no reason to do it, because she put me upon this undertaking. Well, then, I'll for once make the experiment. But by what names shall I call them? I can't tell, unless it be by the names of the beasts into which they are changed. Let me do so, then; you Oyster there, do you hear me?

*Oyster:* Why, what business have you with me, Ulysses?

*Ulysses:* I would call you by your proper name if only I knew it. But if you are a Greek, as Circe informs me, prithee tell me what it is.

*Oyster:* I was a Greek before I was changed into an oyster, I lived not far from Athens, my name was Itacus, and by occupation I was a poor fisherman.

*Ulysses:* Why, then, rejoice and be merry; for, partly out of compassion, as knowing you were born a man, and partly out of the love I bear you because you are my countryman, I have prevailed with Circe to restore you to your human shape, and propose to carry you home with me to Greece.

*Oyster:* Say no more of this, Ulysses, since all the prudence and eloquence for which you are famous among the Greeks will make no impression on me. 'Tis but lost time to advise me to leave all the conveniences which in my present condition I so happily enjoy, without any perplexity or thought at all; you will never persuade me to become a man again, who is the most unhappy creature in the universe.

*Ulysses:* Eh, my friend Itacus, it seems when you lost your human shape you also lost your reason.

*Oyster:* If it's any comfort to you, Ulysses, you'll never lose yours, because you have none—if you believe as you talk. But let us put raillery apart and argue this matter friendly and calmly between ourselves; you shall see whether I, who have tried both conditions of man and beast, am able to maintain my point.

*Ulysses:* I should be happy indeed to hear you do that.

*Oyster:* Listen, then; but before we proceed with the discussion, you must promise that while I open (as you see) to speak, you will take care that those confounded crabs shall not throw a stone between my two shells, which would hinder me from shutting them ever after.

*Ulysses:* And prithee why should they do that?

*Oyster:* Why, to draw me out with their claws and make a meal of me; for these tricks, you must know, they play on us when they find us open.

*Ulysses:* What a cunning device is that! But who is it that taught you to beware of them and avoid their treachery?

*Oyster:* Nature, that provides every creature with all that is necessary to its safety.

*Ulysses:* Have no fear, and speak out boldly, for I engage to watch for you.

*Oyster:* To return, then, to my argument; tell me, Ulysses, you men that boast so much of your reason and pride yourselves upon being more wise and prudent than we, don't you set the greatest esteem upon that which you judge to be best in its kind?

*Ulysses:* No doubt we do, and this is one of the chief signs by which we discover perfection and wisdom. To esteem all things alike, as it proceeds from ignorance of their intrinsic nature and goodness, so it is a manifest mark of folly.

*Oyster:* And don't you likewise love some things better than others?

*Ulysses:* Most certainly, since all love and hatred is founded upon knowledge. Whatever we judge to be good we desire and love; as, on the other hand, we hate and avoid whatever seems bad.

*Oyster:* Very well, and as you love them better than the rest, have you not a greater care of them?

*Ulysses:* Who ever doubted that?

*Oyster:* Well, don't you think nature does the same—or the intelligence which directs nature? And does it much more rationally than you, since nature cannot err? This maxim I have heard many times, when I was selling my fish in Athens, from those philosophers who stand around all day near the Portico, disputing and reasoning together.

*Ulysses:* I grant this too.

*Oyster:* Nay, if you grant me this, you grant me likewise that we are better and more noble than you.

*Ulysses:* And how is that?

*Oyster:* Because if nature has a greater regard for us than for you, she consequently loves us better; and, loving us better, she can do it for no other reason than that I gave you just now.

*Ulysses:* Why you reason like the ablest logician in Athens.

*Oyster:* As for logic, I don't know what it means, so how could I be a logician? I talk just as nature has instructed me, and this consequence anyone may make that has the use of reason, since it is so plain and evident.

*Ulysses:* Ay, were it so plain as you pretend that nature has greater regard for you than for us.

*Oyster:* Oh, that's easy to prove. Listen to me, if you will put me to the trouble of a demonstration; and to make it all clear to you, we will begin from the very first day that she brings forth you and us into the world, I mean from the day of our birth. Now tell me, what extraordinary care does she seem to have taken of you, since she causes you to be born naked? Whereas, on the contrary, she has shown what a value she sets on us, by sending us into the world clothed, some with skins, some with hair, some with scales, some with feathers, some with one thing, some with another, which evidently shows that our preservation was close to her heart.

*Ulysses:* This argument is futile; for though nature has made us naked, and covered us with so thin a skin that the least thing hurts us, the reason was that she knew we should have more occasion than you to exercise the fancy and our inward senses, whose business it is to serve the understanding. And therefore it was convenient that our members, and particularly those organs and instruments by which mental operations are performed, should be more delicate and mobile, as likewise our blood finer and hotter than yours; and

from this proceeds the weakness of our constitution. For if we were compounded of those rough humors and gross particles that you are (which is the reason why you are stronger and lustier than we, but yet not longer-lived, because the latter comes from the tempering of the constitution, in which we very much surpass you, and therefore have a sense of touch much more exquisite than yours), it would necessarily follow that we must be as ignorant and imperceptive as you are. 'Tis an old observation of the physiologists that the habits of the mind follow the constitution of the body; thus we may observe that the customs of a lion or a bear are suited to the members of those animals. And thus we find among men that those who are compounded of gross humors are also gross of understanding and, on the other hand, those that are made of finer, more mobile particles have likewise subtler apprehensions. So that nature, having intended to make us more rational creatures and give us the most perfect knowledge, was in a manner forced to make us so.

*Oyster:* *Forced*, do you say? No, I will never believe that; because, as she made all things, she could make them as she pleased and might very well have taken another method and order for creating them. As, for example, she might have made water to heat and fire to refrigerate.

*Ulysses:* True. But then this admirable order, which is established among creatures, and to which they admittedly owe their whole beauty, had never been seen in the world.

*Oyster:* On the other hand, we should have had another order, which would have produced another sort of beauty, perhaps more agreeable than that which we see.

*Ulysses:* Oh, as long as we are dealing in perhappes, we shall be wandering far out of our way. But what does it matter if nature has sent us naked into the world, since she has

given us dexterity and strength enough to cover ourselves with your clothing?

*Oyster:* Ay, but consider then what dangers you run and how many of you have lost your lives in endeavoring to cover yourselves with our spoils. And besides, think of the labor and toil you undergo to make them fit for service, for before you can make use of our skins you must dress them; and as for our hair, you must comb it and weave it and play a thousand tricks with it before it is fit for your use.

*Ulysses:* This labor you talk of is both delightful and wholesome, more like a pastime to us than otherwise.

*Oyster:* Yes, so I suppose it is to such as do it for pleasure, like you; but ask those that drudge out of necessity, and have a wife and family to maintain out of the sweat of their brows, whether there is any great pleasure in this sort of life, and you'll soon find where the truth lies. This I remember full well, that when I was a man it went so much against the grain with me to work, that I chose to be a fisherman, and would have taken an even meaner occupation if it had excused me from working. I always thought labor to be the business of oxen, who drudge all year round and, when they can drudge no more, are knocked on the head.

*Ulysses:* Oh, if you took up the fisherman's trade to avoid working, you have suffered the fate of all who hate industry. You chose an employment which, since you did not take it up for your pleasure, is the most laborious and painful that can be. Not to mention the infinite dangers you are exposed to, the discomforts of wind and sun, of heat and cold, and a thousand inconveniences besides.

*Oyster:* And this, you see, is why I will never be a man again, and I think I have reason enough for it, since nature

seems to interest herself so little on your account that she not only sends you naked into the world but does not so much as provide you with a house to shelter you from the weather, as she has kindly done for us; which is a plain indication that you are no better than so many rebels and banditti, having no certain place of your own to reside in.

*Ulysses:* What house has she made for you?

*Oyster:* What house! Cast your eyes a little upon these two shells, and observe with what art and convenience she has built this home for me. See how easily I open and shut them, whenever I want to feed or rest or defend myself from an attacker. Consider likewise what she has done for the snails and tortoises, and how readily they carry their houses about them.

*Ulysses:* But then what houses has she provided for the other beasts, who are much more numerous, and likewise for the birds?

*Oyster:* Why the caves and dens of the earth serve them in winter, and in summer the trees and tops of hills.

*Ulysses:* Very fine houses indeed! I daresay they live very commodiously in them.

*Oyster:* If they have not so many conveniences as yours have, neither do they have so many perplexities and vexations.

*Ulysses:* And what perplexities and vexations do our houses give us, since we make them with our own hands to please ourselves?

*Oyster:* What perplexities and vexations? Why, to maintain and preserve them from the injuries of time and weather. Besides, when does any one of you pass a quiet comfortable hour in them without worrying whether they will fall down about you? And, what is worse, when the earth trembles, how nimbly you scamper out of them, for fear they should tumble on your heads. I recall upon such an occasion once



in my country the inhabitants were so scared that they stood out in the fields all night and in the daytime walked in droves together, praying and crying to the gods and carrying about certain holy amulets, with lighted torches in their hands—all of which plainly shows that fear has so much power over you that sometimes you lose your wits completely.

*Ulysses:* Pshaw! These accidents happen so seldom that they don't deserve to be mentioned.

*Oyster:* Besides, you cannot afford to build houses everywhere you go, as nature has done for us, neither can you pretend to carry them with you, as several of us can.

*Ulysses:* And what harm is there in this, when we already have houses which suit us?

*Oyster:* What harm, say you? What if you have the ill fortune to be settled near a bad neighbor, who by his evil habits or ill practices proves a perpetual thorn in your side, who plagues you and destroys your peace of mind; would you not be glad to move elsewhere, and is it not a cruel vexation that you cannot move to another place, as we do when we see fit? But, to return to what we talked of first, I maintain that nature has showed greater concern for us than she has for you (as I said before) and that, since she cannot err, it follows that we are better and far more noble than you.

*Ulysses:* Why, this is nothing but sophistry; for though nature may have furnished you with several conveniences which we don't enjoy, yet she did so only because she knew that you were not able to procure them for yourselves. But listen to what I am going to say, and you'll soon be sensible which of us is the nobler creature. Answer me now: Which of the two is the more noble, the master or the servant?

*Oyster:* The master, no doubt, considered merely as master.

*Ulysses:* You say right; and so in all things, that which is the end is more noble than that which is ordained to maintain and serve it. Hence it plainly follows that we, being your end, must be more noble than you. Now that we are the end for which you were made, and that nature created you to serve us, experience plainly shows, since while you live we make you carry our things from one place to another, till the soil, and do a thousand other things for us. And then when you are dead, we clothe ourselves with your skins and feed upon your flesh. So tell me now whether nature intended you for our service or not.

*Oyster:* If this argument will hold water, why then nature made you men for the earth, for it is she that at last devours you all; and therefore man must be less noble than the earth, since she is the end of you all.

*Ulysses:* This argument won't serve your turn, and to satisfy you that what I say is true, you must observe that there are two sorts of ends.

*Oyster:* Spare yourself the labor of this argument, Ulysses; for I can see you are going to enter into one of those long-winded disputations which I used to listen to at the Portico in Athens, when I went there to sell my fish and so earn my meager living—disputations which, in my judgment, neither the philosophers themselves nor their hearers understood. — But I feel the dew begins to fall, on which I feed, and therefore I open my shell, as you see, to receive it; and in this I find so much pleasure, without any trouble or concern of my own, that while I was man I never enjoyed the like. So that you need not wonder if I am resolved to stay as I am. If you are of another opinion, please keep it to yourself, and trouble me no more, for after I have finished eating, I will shut up my little house and take my repose

without a single thought, which is a blessing you seldom enjoy, and this happy life I infinitely prefer to any which I might hope by your means to obtain.

*Ulysses:* I could hardly have happened upon a worse fellow to persuade than this. I suppose he was some ignorant wretch in his time; and his trade sufficiently shows it, for men who pursue fish or birds are all low fellows, of feeble understandings. I could see that he knew little or nothing of the pleasures of this world, since he preferred a little dew to the best of them. Well, then, let me leave him to his misery, a most just reward of his folly, and try to reason with the mole, which Circe told me was in yonder hillock of earth, for perhaps he may prove a man of better understanding. I will walk up to him and accost him without more ceremony. Mole, oh, Mole!

*Mole:* What business have you with me, Ulysses, and what makes you disturb my nap in this way?

*Ulysses:* Why, if you only knew what I have obtained from Circe, for your advantage, you would alter your language, I suppose, and not say I come to disturb you—provided you still have your reason, as I do.

*Mole:* As if I did not hear what it was just now, from your own mouth, when you talked with that other Greek there whom Circe transformed into an oyster.

*Ulysses:* In short, I can restore you to your human shape, deliver you from this place, and carry you along with me to the place of your nativity, if you are a Greek, as she informed me.

*Mole:* While I was a man, I called myself a Greek; and I was born in the most beautiful part of Aetolia.

*Ulysses:* And don't you want to resume your former shape and return to your own home again?

*Mole:* I certainly don't, and if I did I'd be a fool.

*Ulysses:* Why, is it folly for anyone to desire a better position in the world?

*Mole:* No, but to seek for a worse, as I should most certainly do were I to become a man again; for in my present condition, I enjoy the greatest pleasure that can be, whereas, being a man, I should find the case altered and live in perpetual trouble and vexation, as is the regular fate of human beings.

*Ulysses:* Prithee, who taught you this doctrine, that dolt of a fisherman that I was just now talking with, eh?

*Mole:* Even the best teacher in the world, I mean experience.

*Ulysses:* And how do you come to know by experience that we are more unhappy and miserable than you?

*Mole:* I will give only one instance, which I gathered out of my own occupation, and leave it to you afterwards to pick out a hundred more at your leisure, that are no less evident than this.

*Ulysses:* And what occupation or art did you follow, that led you to so false a conclusion?

*Mole:* I was a ploughman.

*Ulysses:* I find I have jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire, left the company of a fisherman to fall into the hands of a ploughman, who, if he is not precisely the same as the other fellow, will be even less able to comprehend reason.

*Mole:* Call me no names, Ulysses, for every man is a man; but rather attend to what I am going to say, for if you consider it well, perhaps you'll regret that Circe has not yet turned you into a beast, as she did us.

*Ulysses:* Go on, then, for I desire nothing more.

*Mole:* What beasts do you find in all your observations, either in earth or water, the species of which are almost infinite, for whom nature does not voluntarily provide

food? whereas man must manure the earth, and plough it, and sow it if he would have it furnish him with food, as it does to the rest of creation.

*Ulysses:* This is his own fault, since nothing but delicate foods will please him. If he would feed upon the fruits which the earth produces of its own accord, as the beasts do, he would have no such problem.

*Mole:* But, pray, what herbs, what seeds, what fruits does earth produce of her own accord (unless she is assisted by art) that are sufficient for human sustenance and to maintain the temperature of a human organism?

*Ulysses:* Why, haven't you read that the good people of the Golden Age had precisely this nourishment?

*Mole:* Alas, and do you believe these idle stories, you that seem to be so wise a man?

*Ulysses:* Well, supposing them to be stories as you say, yet the labor a man takes to manure and till the ground, to water and prune his vines, and to graft his fruit trees, does it not carry pleasure with it? So that one might say nature purposely contrived it chiefly for his diversion, that he might not live a lazy life, and only secondarily for his welfare and profit. And to prove my point, do but consider what a splendid reward she gives him for the pains he takes, by which it appears that nothing is so advantageous and delightful as agriculture. Or I might tell you that nature has ordered it thus on purpose, to give man an opportunity to display his ingenuity and cunning and superiority over the beasts.

*Mole:* I suspect she intended that he should never get any rest or pass one easy, comfortable hour. Besides, to trouble him further, she alarms him with fears of famine, so that if through bad weather the earth does not produce her fruits one year so liberally as another, he lives all this while

in fear and anxiety lest he and his family should starve, and he never puts a piece of bread into his mouth without a thousand worries. But none of these things ever happen to us, for when we find ourselves pinched where we are, it's only shifting our quarters and removing to a better place.

*Ulysses:* As if we men did not know enough to supply our necessities out of foreign countries, where there is plenty, any time there is scarcity in our own.

*Mole:* Right, but then what dangers and troubles, both by land and sea, do you undergo to do this? And what uneasiness of mind does it give you, which is worse? 'Tis evident enough that your life is nothing but one continual struggle, sometimes with one unlucky disaster, sometimes with another, so that it is with good reason that you weep at your first coming into the world (which none of us do), foreseeing as it were the infelicity and misery of that state into which you are just entered.

*Ulysses:* That cannot be the reason of our weeping, because we have no apprehension at that time, as you very well know.

*Mole:* Though I grant you have no apprehension, yet you begin to feel the inconveniences of the place where you come to inhabit; which, as I have already observed, is made agreeable to the nature of all other animals, but it's otherwise with you only, and that is why weeping is peculiar to your species.

*Ulysses:* How only to our species? Don't horses likewise weep? At least I have been told so.

*Mole:* I myself don't think so, and rather believe that those tears which at certain times drop from their eyes are occasioned by some moist superfluous humors that descend from the head, because a horse is a very tender creature.

Or if he really weeps, he does it for some misfortune that has befallen him, as, for instance, for the loss of a good master or the absence of some beloved brother of his own kind. For he is naturally a loving and affectionate creature. However, this is certain, that he does not weep immediately after his birth, as you do, who in truth have too many occasions to weep, considering that you must be bound up and swaddled and fed by nurses; for, alas, you can do nothing for yourselves! And therefore, Ulysses, exert yourself no further, for I am one of those that would rather die than become a man again.

*Ulysses:* One would be apt to conclude, old mole, that, as I told yonder oyster just now, you had lost the use of your reason together with your human shape. And to make you sensible of this, only reflect what sort of beasts both of you are, for if you were perfect in your own kind, I would own that you had some reason on your side.

*Mole:* And just what do we lack?

*Ulysses:* What do you lack? The oyster the sense of smelling and hearing and, what is more important, the power to move from place to place. And then for your part, you lack a sense of sight, the great value and advantage of which you must know, since it contributes more to knowledge than all the rest.

*Mole:* Oh, in this sense we're all imperfect. You say we lack what all animals have, but that's not to the point; you might properly call us imperfect if we wanted any things that were essential to our species.

*Ulysses:* But wouldn't it be better for you to have them?

*Mole:* No, upon my word, it wouldn't. What would seeing signify to me who am a mole, or what benefit would an oyster have from smelling, hearing, and the power of rambling about? Now to satisfy you fully in this point, pray

hear me a few words. For what reason have you men a power given you to move about from one place to another, but only to fetch those things that you lack?

*Ulysses:* I must say that nature has given us locomotion with no other purpose, and thus we commonly say that all motion proceeds from necessity.

*Mole:* So, then, if the things you wanted were near to you, you wouldn't move for them, would you?

*Ulysses:* No, why should we?

*Mole:* What occasion, then, has an oyster to move from one place to another, if he has everything to hand that he wants? or what need of smelling, if nature provides food without his troubling himself about what is good for him and what not? In the like manner I, who must always live underground, where I find enough to satisfy me, how should I be the better for seeing?

*Ulysses:* Well, it may not be necessary, but I think you should desire it anyhow.

*Mole:* And why so? Since it doesn't agree with my nature, I am content to be perfect in my own species. Do you desire to shine like a star or fly like a bird?

*Ulysses:* These are things that don't belong to us men.

*Mole:* Yet I suppose if other men had them, you would desire the same.

*Ulysses:* 'Tis true, I would.

*Mole:* Even so, I should desire sight if other moles enjoyed it, but since they have it not, I never think about the matter, far less desire it. And therefore, Ulysses, don't trouble yourself any further, or think to inveigle me into becoming a man again; for since I find myself perfect in my own kind, and live without a thought in the world, I intend to remain this way, because I find far fewer vexations in this than I did in the human state. So, sir, if you will kindly go about

your business, I intend to retire for a while underground.

*Ulysses:* I can scarcely tell if I am awake or dreaming. If I am awake, surely I am not the same Ulysses as I used to be, since I have not been able to persuade either of these two sots to believe the truth. And yet by the power of my eloquence I used to be able to lead the Greeks as I pleased. But I believe the fault lies on their side, for it has been my ill fortune to light upon a pair who were simply incapable of reason; nor is it any great wonder, since one of them was a fisherman and the other a ploughman. I suppose I shall have better luck with the rest, if I try them, unless they are all the same sort. So I will return to Circe, and let her know how I have succeeded, and ask her (since she has already passed her promise) to let me argue the matter with some of the rest, for I should think it very harsh and unjust that others should suffer for the sake of two fellows that know not, and do not want to know, what is for their good.

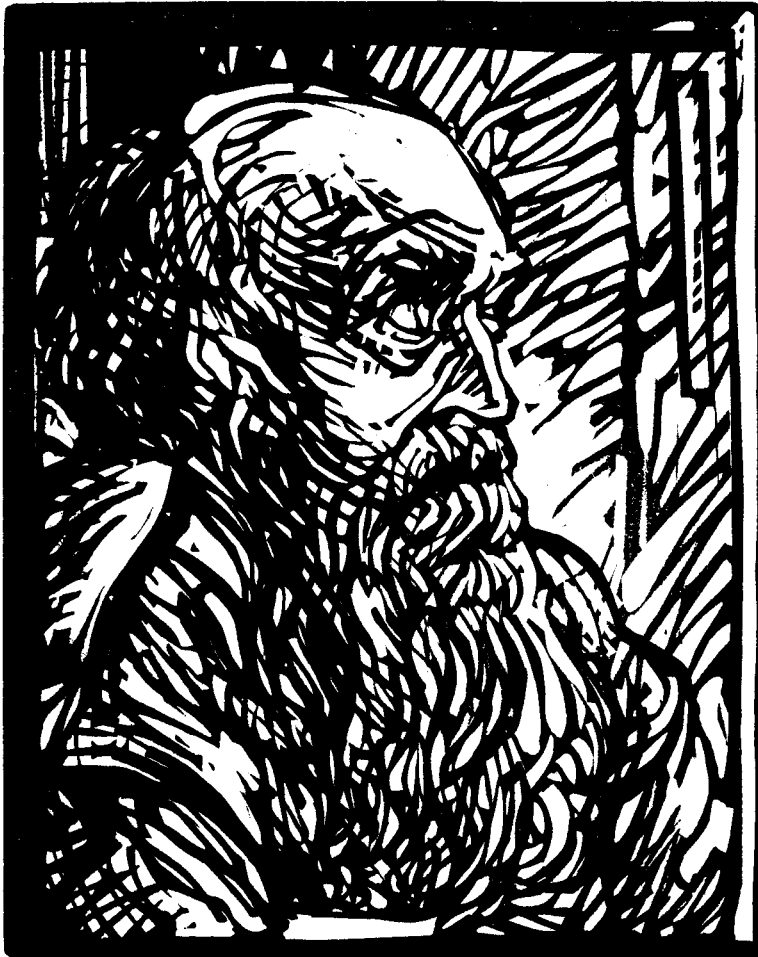
## *Dialogue II: Ulysses, Circe, the Snake*



*Circe:* Well, my dear Ulysses, and what do your countrymen the Greeks say to you? Are any of them willing to become men again?

*Ulysses:* Not one. 'Tis true indeed I have only talked with those two you showed me, one of whom had been a fisherman and the other a ploughman; so it's no wonder at all if two men whose lives had been so miserable and painful refused to try their fortunes in the world again.

*Circe:* Don't think I did this without design. I determined you should begin with those two fellows to convince you



GIOVANNI BATTISTA GELLI

# THE CIRCE

OF

Signior Giovanni Battista Gelli  
of the Academy of Florence

Consisting of Ten Dialogues between Ulysses and  
several men transformed into beasts, satirically  
representing the various passions of mankind and  
the many infelicities of human life

Done out of Italian by  
Mr. Thomas Brown  
(*of facetious memory*)

*and now newly corrected by comparison with the original,  
re-Englished in part, and provided with an introduction*

*by Mr. Robert Adams  
(of Cornell University)*

*Illustrations by Peter Kahn*

—pauci dignoscere possunt  
Vera bona, atq: illis multum diversa, remota  
Erroris nebula. Quid enim ratione timemus  
Aut cupimus— Juv. Sat. 10

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